

MAXIM GORKY



EVSEIKA GOES FISHING





MALYSH PUBLISHERS



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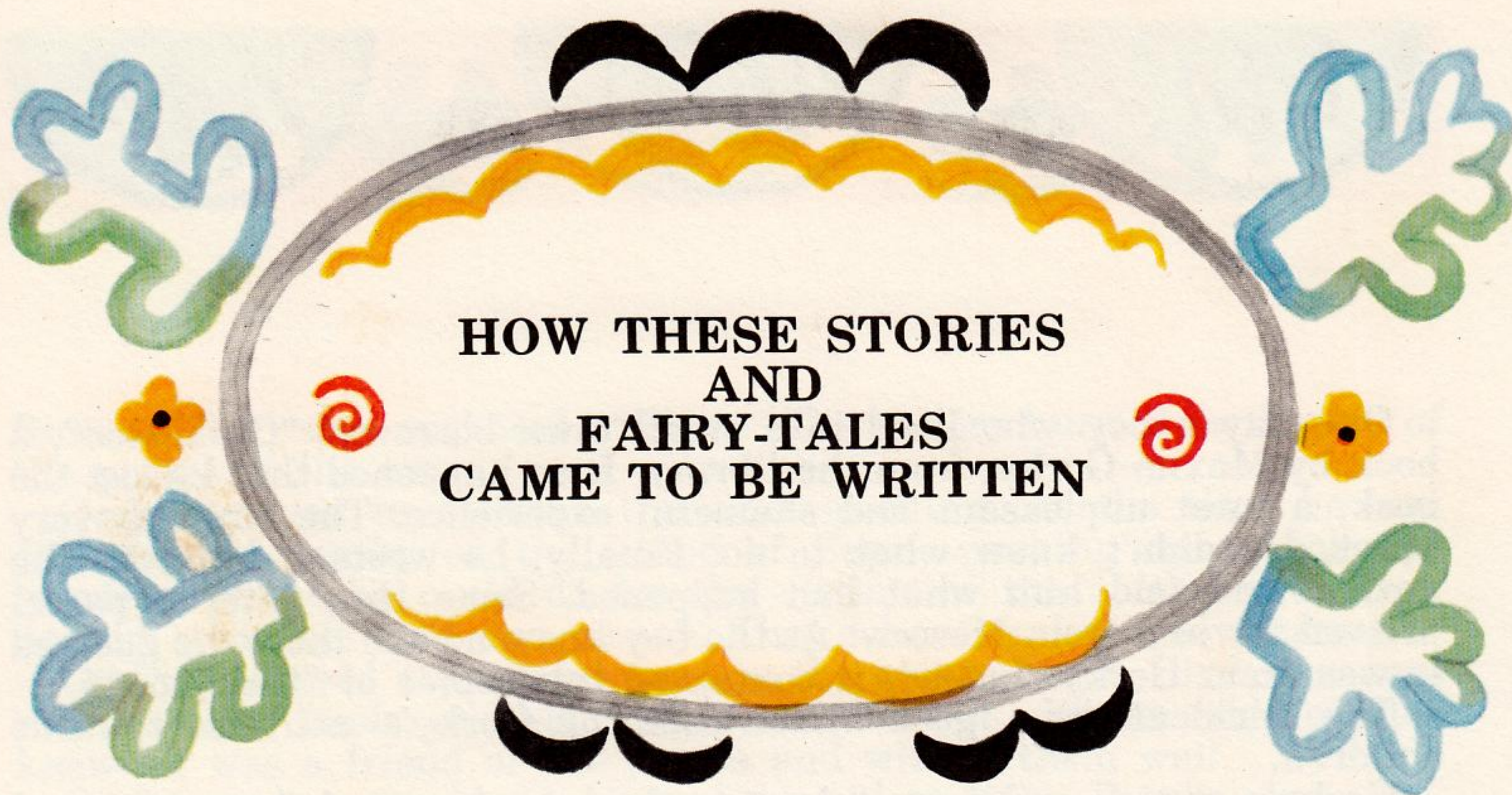


**EVSEIKA
GOES
FISHING**

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Translated by GALINA GLAGOLEVA





“My warmest greetings to the fine workers and scientists of the future. Live in harmony, as a musician’s fingers work so wondrously together. Learn to understand the importance of work and science, two forces which will solve all of life’s mysteries and which will overcome all obstacles along the way your fathers pointed out to you, the way towards a bright, happy and noble life.”

This is what Maxim Gorky wrote in one of his last letters to children, with whom he had been great friends all his life.



One day a boy who lived in a small town borrowed "Childhood", a book by Maxim Gorky, from the library. It so happened that he lost the book, a most unpleasant and shameful experience. The boy was very upset. He didn't know what to do. Finally, he wrote a letter to the author and told him what had happened. Some time later a parcel arrived for him from Moscow. As the boy knew no one there, he guessed it was from Gorky. Indeed, it contained two copies of "Childhood".

The incident is a good illustration of Gorky's attitude towards children.

Gorky's stories and fairy-tales for children appeared in an unusual way: they had their beginning in the earthquake of December 15th, 1908 in Southern Italy.

The first quakes came at dawn, when everyone was still fast asleep. In a few minutes the town of Messina lay in ruins. It had suffered from earth tremors before, but this time it was really terrible. Thousands of people died, and there were countless injured.

Messina is a port city. All the vessels in the area made for port. The "Bogatyr", the "Slava" and the "Admiral Makarov", all flying the





Russian flag, also anchored offshore. The sailors hurried to the aid of the people of the town.

Gorky arrived in Messina the next morning. At the time he was convalescing nearby on the island of Capri, working on a book. He wondered what he could do for the victims of the earthquake. They needed medicine, food and money. They'd have to have new homes.

Gorky possessed a powerful weapon: the written word. His books were read in many lands, and his readers took heed of what he said, for they knew he was a friend of the people and wished them well.

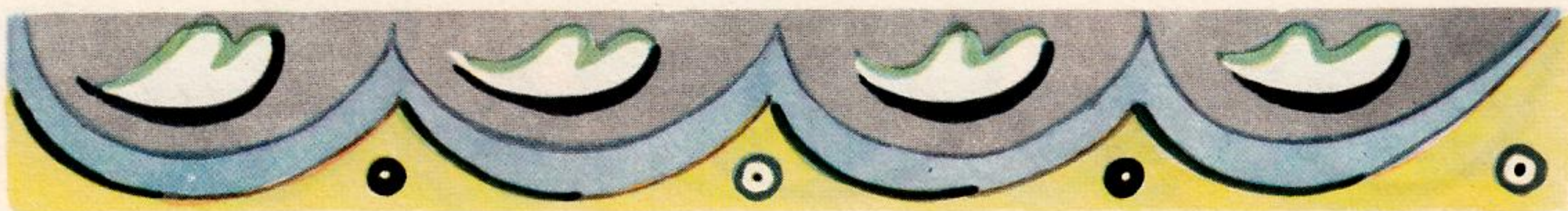
Gorky made a worldwide appeal for aid to Italy. People responded. Money and clothing was sent to Messina, and many of the donations were addressed to Gorky.

One day he received some money and a letter from Russia. The letter was in a child's hand. It was from some children who lived near Baku in a town called Bailov. This is what they had written:

"Please give this money to the writer Maxim Gorky for the people of Messina."

The letter was signed: "The School of Mischief-Makers."





Where had they got the money? They had earned it themselves. They had put on a play and sold tickets. Alisa Radchenko, a teacher who was later to work with Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, was the general organizer. Enclosed in the letter was a photograph of the twelve youngsters who had taken part in the project.

This is what Gorky wrote in reply:

"Dear children,

"I have received the money you collected for the people of Messina and thank you warmly on behalf of all those you've helped. You're kind little people, and I sincerely wish that all your lives you'll be as compassionate towards others as you showed yourselves to be now. The greatest joy in life is to feel you are needed and are dear to others. This is a truth which, if you remember it, will bring you true happiness... Be well, be good to each other, and be as mischievous as you can, so that when you get to be old men and women you can laugh heartily when you recall all your pranks.

"I give your little paws a firm shake and hope they'll be strong and honest all your lives."





Each member of the "School of Mischief-Makers" (Borya, Vitya, Gyunt, Dima, Fedya, Geoffrey, Zhenya, Irena, Lena, Liza, Mema, Mary, Nora, Pavel and Elsa) sent Maxim Gorky a reply.

Six-year-old Fedya wrote: "There are 3 main mischief-makers: Geoffrey, Borya and Fedya. But I'm ever so lazy."¹

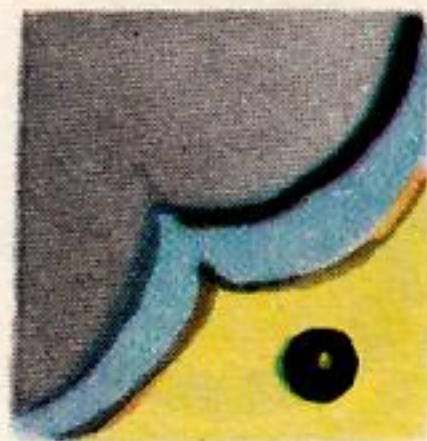
Geoffrey was even more brief: "I fell into the pool. Hooray!" and sent a drawing of the event.

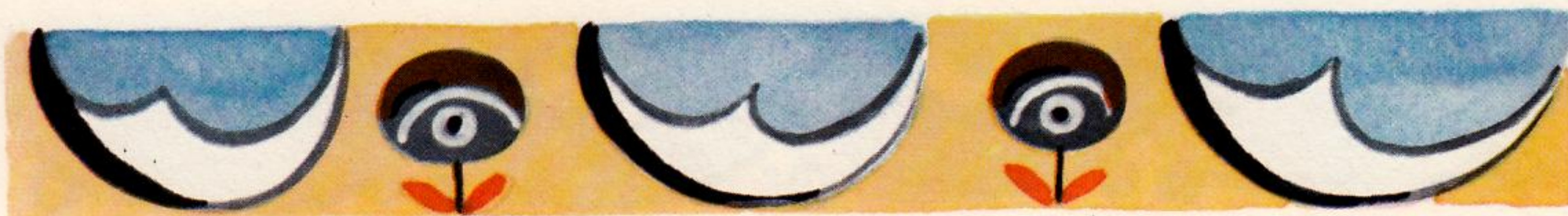
Borya wrote: "Dear Uncle Alyosha. I like you. Do you have a horse, a cow and a bull? Write us a story about a sparrow. And a make-believe one about a boy fishing. Love... I'd like to meet you."

Gorky wrote to his young friends again. He teased them about their spelling mistakes and then said:

"I love to play with children. It's an old habit of mine. When I was about ten I looked after my baby brother... and later two small children.

¹ Here and below are texts taken from the A. M. Gorky Archives.





Finally, when I was about twenty, on holidays I'd take all the children in my block off for a day in the woods.

"It was really wonderful, you know. There would be up to 60 children, still very young, ranging in ages from four to ten. After running around in the woods all day, they were often too tired to walk back home. I had a kind of seat which I'd made. I would strap it to my back, and anyone who was very tired could sit in it, and I'd carry him home across the fields easily. It was wonderful!"

The children were delighted by Gorky's letters. "My dear Gorky," Nora wrote, "Your letter was very nice. Mama and Papa like you, and I do, too... I'm a tomboy and like wearing boy's clothes, because they're comfortable."

Liza asked: "How are you? What are the people in Messina doing?" Vitya was interested in nature. "Are there sponges in the sea around Capri? How long and how wide is Capri? What's the sea around Capri called?" Seven-year-old Pavel wrote: "Dearest Maxim Gorky, I'm sending you a little letter to make you happy. I like to read, and I always read when I get home from school, where I have a good





time, too. I like to read about animals and plants. Their life's very interesting. In your letter you said we've all got turned-up noses. Well, I saw a picture of you, and you've got one, too. I'm very glad you do."

Gorky said that when he received the children's letters he "laughed so that the fish poked their noses up out of the water to see what it was all about."

Most important, however, was that Gorky did what one of the chief mischief-makers had asked him to do: he wrote a story about a sparrow and one about a young fisherman.

The tale about the sparrow has had many editions.

In a letter to the mischief-makers Gorky described how he wrote the story about Samovar.

"Though I'm no youngster, I'm not a dull fellow and can describe what happens to a samovar when someone has lit the coals in it, but forgotten to add more water."

Gorky had probably often entertained children with the story and finally wrote it down.



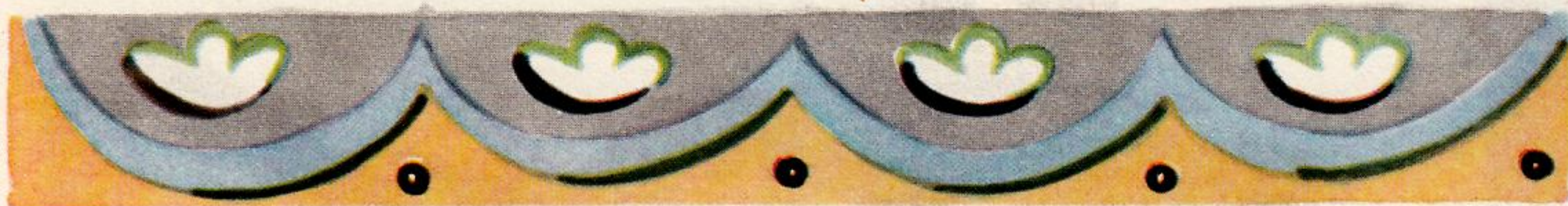


When he sent "The Samovar" to a friend's children, he said he'd written it "with my own hand and especially" for

"Tata, Lyolya and Boba,
so
that they love me,
because,
though

I'm
invisible,
I can write
tales
about cockroaches,
samovars,
hobgoblins,
elephants
and other insects.
Indeed!"





When he was little Gorky heard the tale of Ivan the Fool from his grandmother, and he later wrote his own version for "The Fir Tree", one of the first Soviet children's books.

Gorky appreciated kindness. He was touched by the kindness of the children of Bailov and thanked them as only he could do, with his stories, fairy-tales and rhymes.

In 1926 Alisa Radchenko wrote: "If Gorky ever sees these lines, I'd like him to know that the mischief-makers of yore have justified his hopes and grown up to be good and compassionate people, conscientious workers for the good of society."

Anyone reading Gorky's stories for children today would do well to recall his words:

"Live in harmony, as a musician's fingers work so wondrously together."

Vladimir Prikhodko







THE SPARROW

Sparrows are really just like people: the grown-ups are awfully dull. They can't say anything that doesn't sound as though it's preaching out of a book. But the youngsters have minds of their own.

There was once a baby sparrow named Pudik. He lived behind the top lintel over the bathhouse window in a warm nest made of tow, moss and other soft

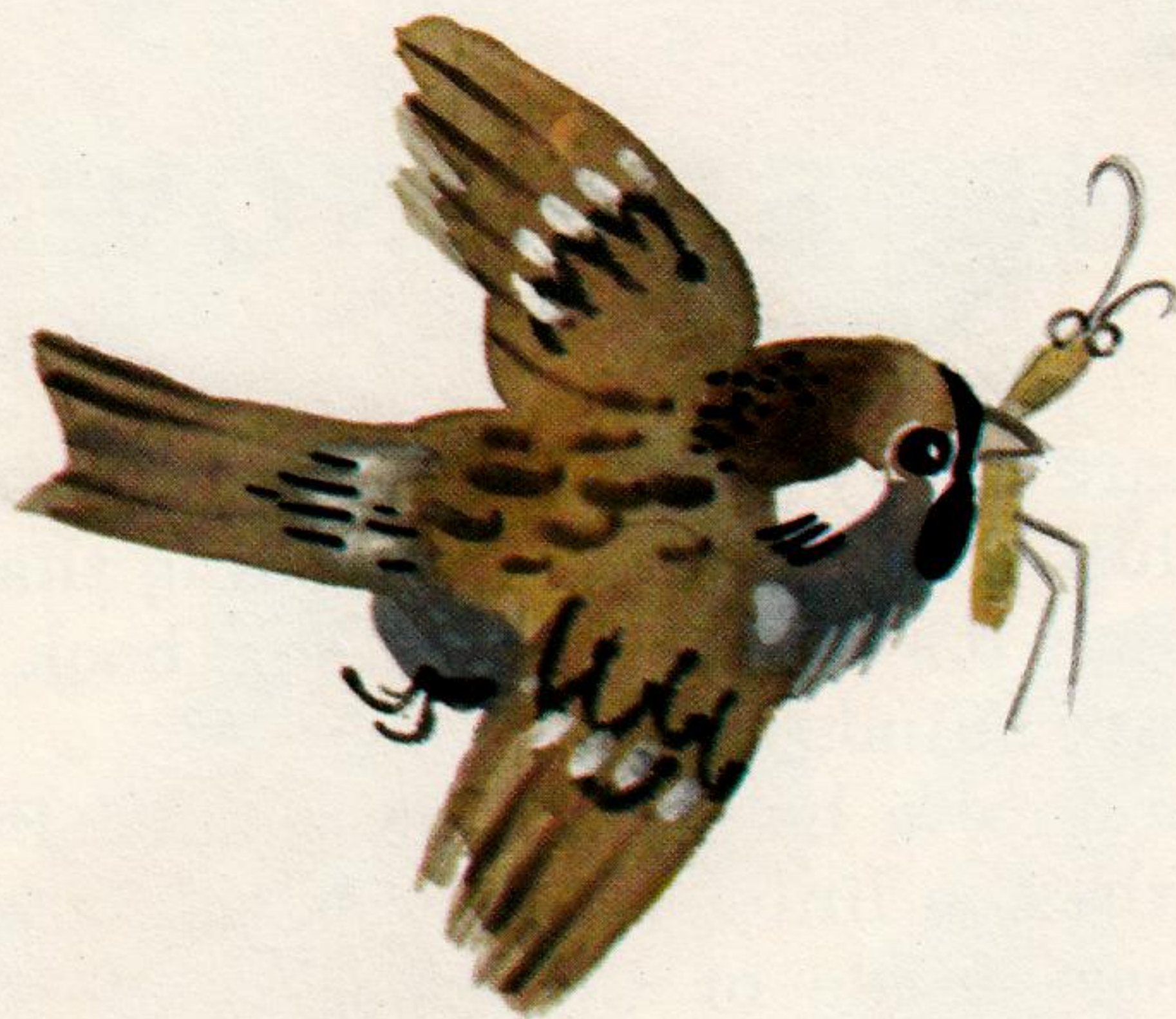
scraps. He'd never tried to fly yet, but he could flap his wings and kept peeping out of the nest to see what the great wide world was all about and to discover whether it was a fit place for him or not.

"Chirp! What is it?" Mama Sparrow said.

He ruffled his feathers, looked down at the ground and twittered, "Terrible! Terrible!"

Papa Sparrow flew up with a bug for Pudik and boasted, "Aren't I chipper?"

"Chipper-chirpy!" Mama Sparrow replied approvingly.





Pudik gulped down the bug and said to himself: "What's there to boast about a worm with legs?"

And he kept leaning out of the nest, staring at everything.

"Chirp! Careful! You'll tumble out!" Mama Sparrow twittered.

"No, I won't," Pudik replied.

"If you do fall out—*chomp!*—the cat'll get you," Papa Sparrow warned and flew off in search of food.

Days passed, but Pudik's wings were in no hurry to grow.

One day a wind blew up.

"What's this? What's this?" Pudik said.

"The wind'll blow you down to the ground and into the cat's paws," Mama Sparrow warned.

Pudik didn't like this at all.

"Why are the trees swaying?" he said. "Tell them to stop. Then there won't be any wind."

Mama Sparrow tried to explain that this was impossible, but he didn't believe her. He had his own ideas about everything.

A man was passing by the bathhouse just then, swinging his arms.

"The cat's eaten his wings and only left the bones," Pudik said.





“That’s a man. People never have wings,” Mama Sparrow replied.

“Why?”

“That’s what they’re like: they’re wingless and hop about on two legs. Understand?”



“But why?”

“If they had wings they could catch us as easily as your papa and I catch bugs.”

“Huh!” said Pudik. “How silly! Everybody’s got to have wings. I see it’s much worse on the ground than

it is in the air. When I'm grown I'll make everyone fly."

Pudik didn't believe his mama. He hadn't learned yet that if you don't believe your mama you can get into a lot of trouble. He perched on the edge of the nest and chirped as loudly as he could, singing a song he'd made up,

"Two legs aren't much,
Wingless you,
And as such
You are something to chew
For midges and bugs,
All of whom I eat up!"¹

He sang on and on with such gusto that he tumbled out of the nest. Mama Sparrow flew down after him, but the ginger cat with green eyes was there in a flash.

Pudik was very frightened. He ruffled his feathers, bobbed on his little gray legs and chirped, "It's such a pleasure..."

¹ The rhymes in the book were translated by F. Glagoleva.





But Mama Sparrow pushed him aside. Her feathers were standing on end. She was a terrifying sight. She opened her beak bravely and took aim at one of the cat's eyes.

"Quick! Quick! Off with you, Pudik! Up to the window! Fly!"

Terror lifted the little sparrow off the ground. He hopped, flapped his wings once, twice—and landed on the windowsill!



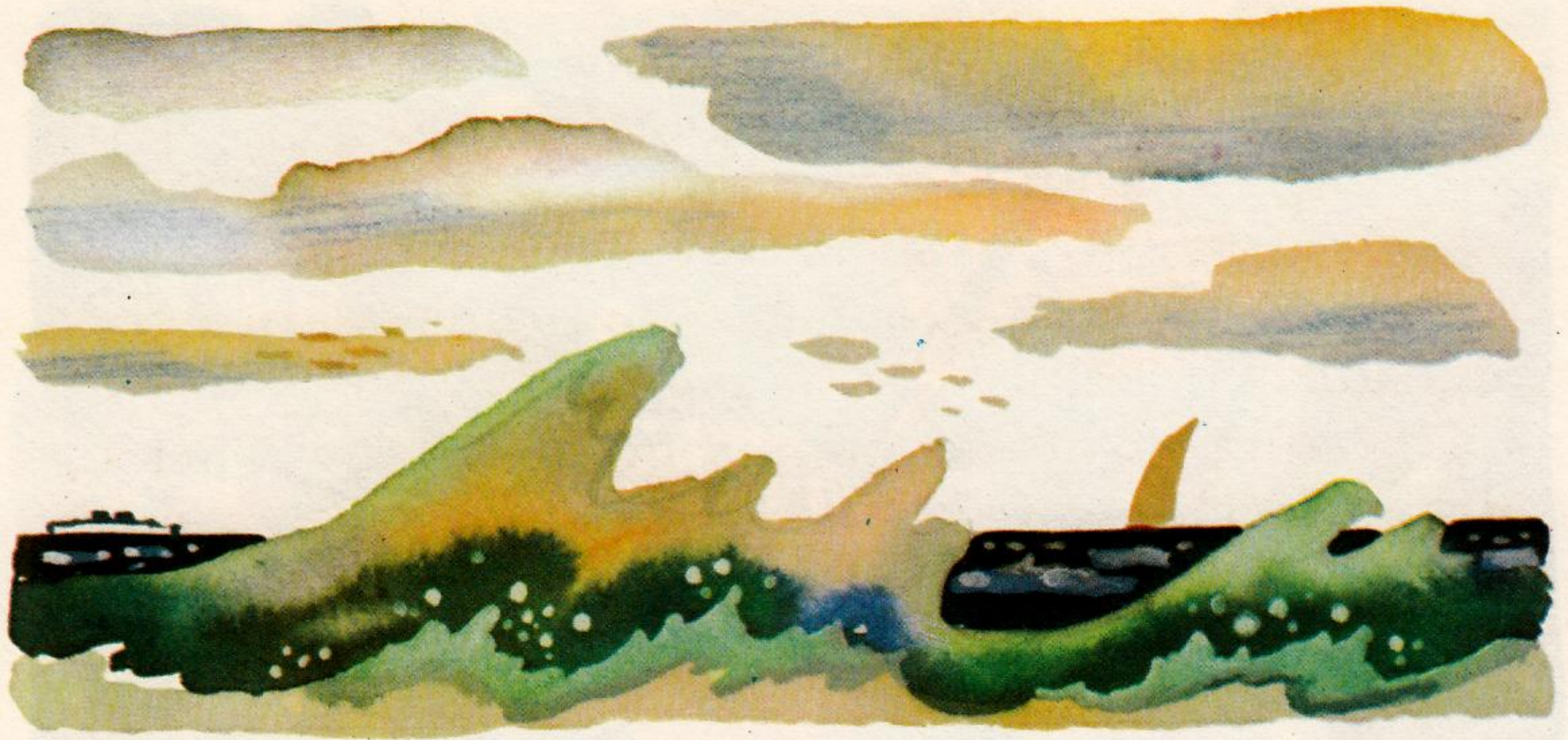
Mama Sparrow was right behind him. She'd lost her tail in the tussle, but she was overjoyed all the same. She perched beside him, pecked him on the back of his head and said, "See?"

"Oh, well," Pudik replied. "You can't learn everything all at once."

The ginger cat sat on the ground below, picking sparrow feathers off his paw. He kept glancing up at them and meowing regretfully, "A me-oww-vellous little sparrow. Just like a me-oww-se. Me-ow."

So all was well, except that Mama Sparrow had lost her tail feathers.





EVSEIKA GOES FISHING

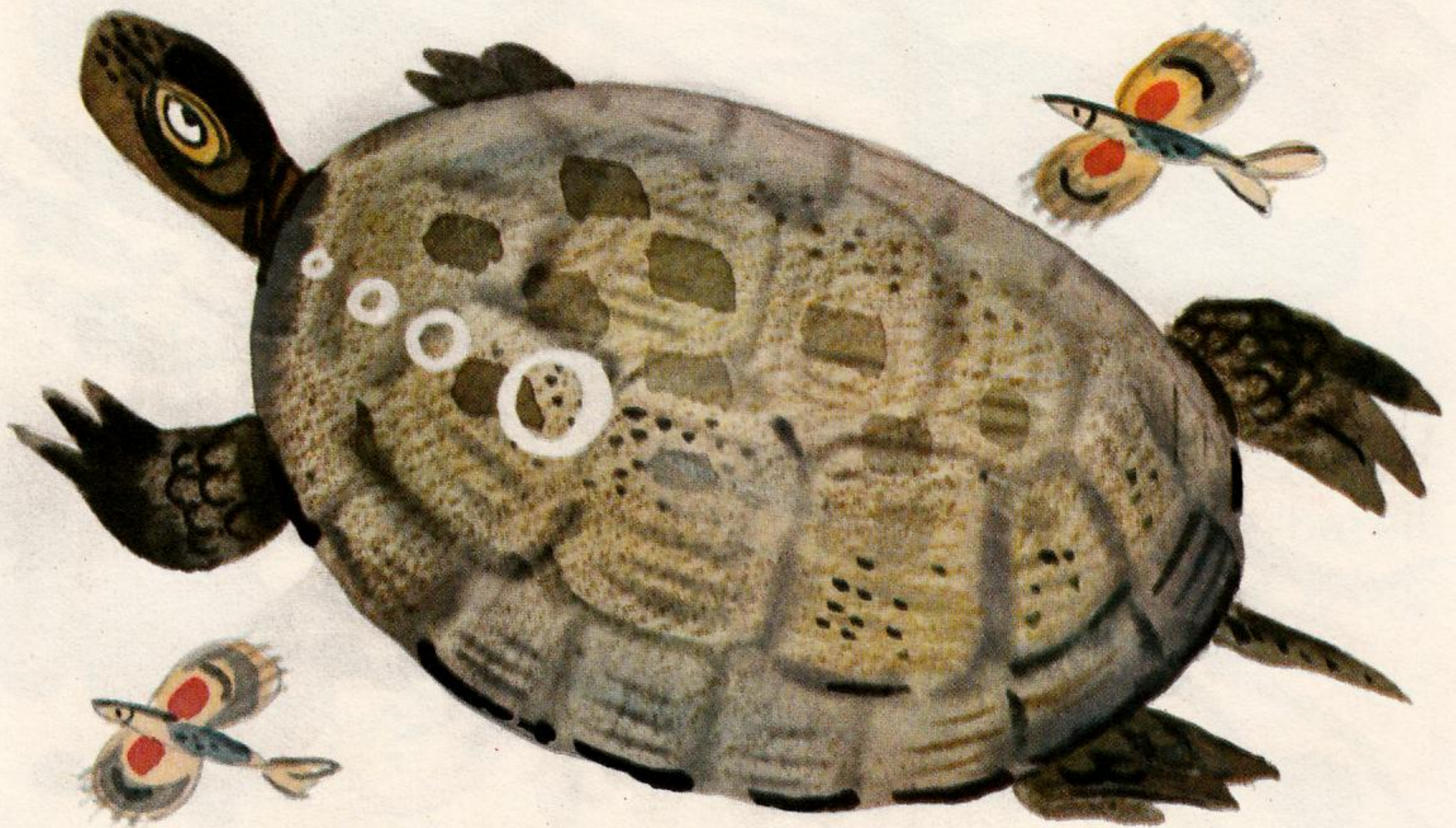
One day a very nice little boy named Evseika was sitting at the edge of the sea, fishing. It's awfully boring if the fish aren't playing fair and won't bite. It was a very hot day. Evseika was so bored he dozed off. *Splash!* He fell into the water.

Strangely, he wasn't frightened at all. He started swimming along slowly, then dived down to the very bottom of the sea. There Evseika sat down on a stone



that was covered with fuzzy, rusty-colored seaweed. He looked around. How interesting everything was!

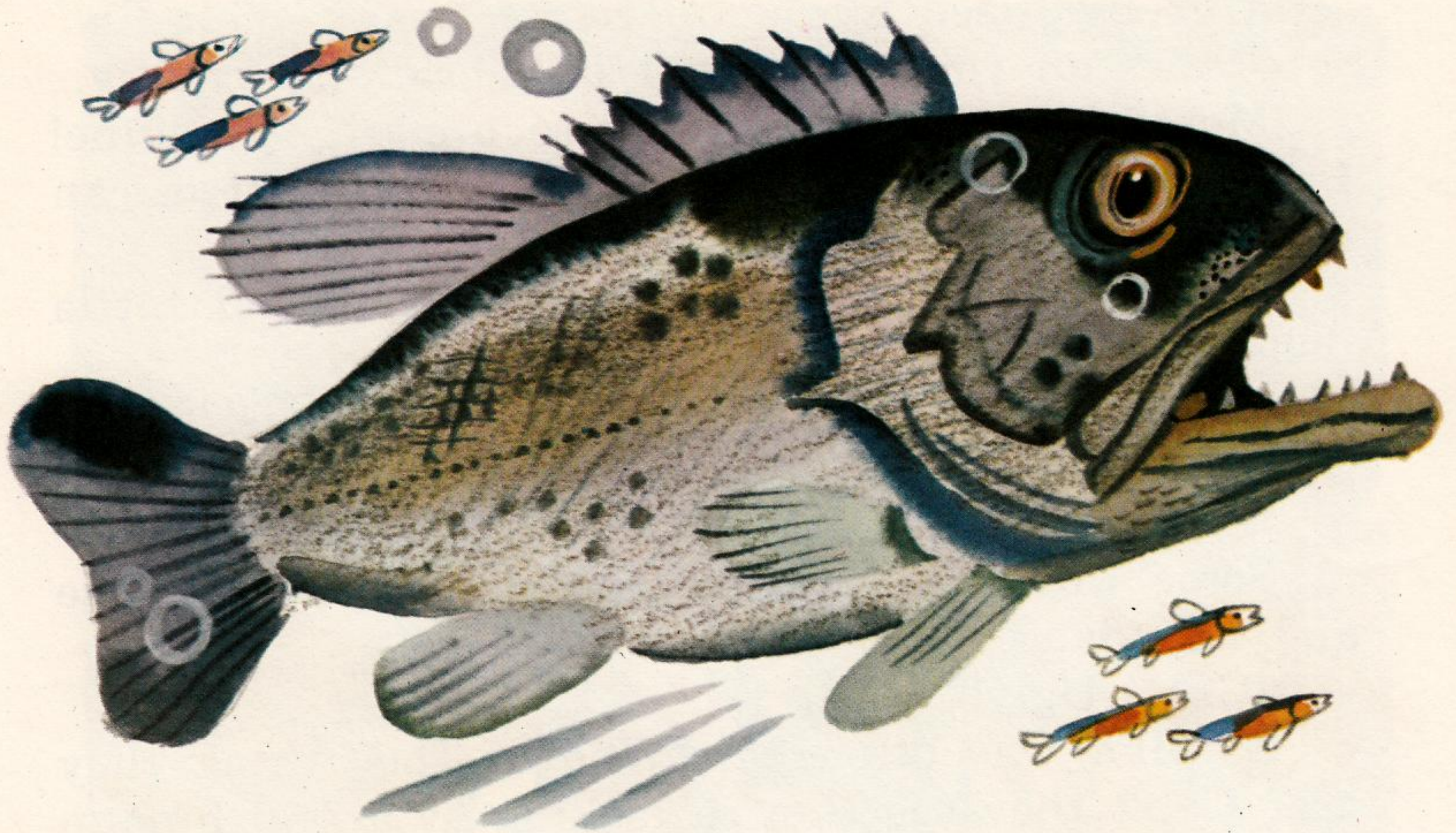
A crimson starfish was inching along, whiskered rock lobsters were strutting about on the stones, and a crab was picking its way, moving sideways. Sea anemones were scattered around like huge cherries. There were so many interesting things to see! Sea lilies were gently swaying, prawns darted about like flies, a huge turtle was dragging itself along with two



little green fish playing above its heavy shell like butterflies dancing in the air, and here a hermit crab was moving its shell-house over the white stones. Spotting it, Evseika suddenly remembered a line from a poem:

“Old Uncle Yakov, your house is not like a cart.”





Suddenly, he heard a piping voice overhead. It sounded like a clarinet: "Who are you?"

He looked up. It was an enormous fish with silvery scales. It had bulging eyes, and its teeth were bared in a grin, as though it had been fried and was lying on a plate on the table.

"Is that you speaking?" Evseika asked.

"Ye-e-es."

This surprised him.

"How can you? Fish can't talk," he said crossly.

Meanwhile, he was saying to himself: "Imagine! I can't understand a word of German, but I can understand Fishtalk! Aren't I clever!"

He puffed out his chest and glanced around. Little fishes swam about, laughing and chattering.

"Look! See the monster? It's got two tails!"

"And no scales! Ugh!"

"And only two fins!"

Some who were bolder swam right up to his nose and teased:

"Ugly! Ugly!"

Evseika was offended. "Who do they think they are? Can't they see they're looking at a real human being?"

He tried to catch them, but they evaded him and darted away, butting each other playfully. Then they began to tease a big crab:

"Creaky Crab lives under stones,
Chewing fishes' tails like bones.
Fishes' tails are very dry,
Crab has never tasted fly."

Crab twitched his antennae menacingly, stretched



out his nippers and muttered, "Just wait till I catch you! I'll snip off your tongues!"

"I've got to watch my step with him," Evseika decided.

A large fish kept at Evseika with its questions:

"Why d'you think fish can't talk?"

"My papa said so."

"What's papa?"

"Uh... Like me, but bigger. And he has a mustache. If he's not angry, he's very nice."

"Does he eat fish?"

The question worried Evseika. What if he said yes? He raised his eyes. Through the water he glimpsed the cloudy-green sky and the yellow sun looking like a copper tray. He thought it over and told a lie.

"No, he doesn't eat fish. They're too bony."

"Indeed! How little he knows!" the fish exclaimed. It sounded hurt. "We're not all bony. Take my family, for example."

"I'd better change the subject," Evseika said to himself and asked politely, "Have you ever been up there?"

"What for?" the fish snorted. "You can't breathe up there."

"But you should see the flies."

The fish swam around him, stopped right in front of his nose and suddenly said, "Fl-i-e-s? Then why've you come down here?"

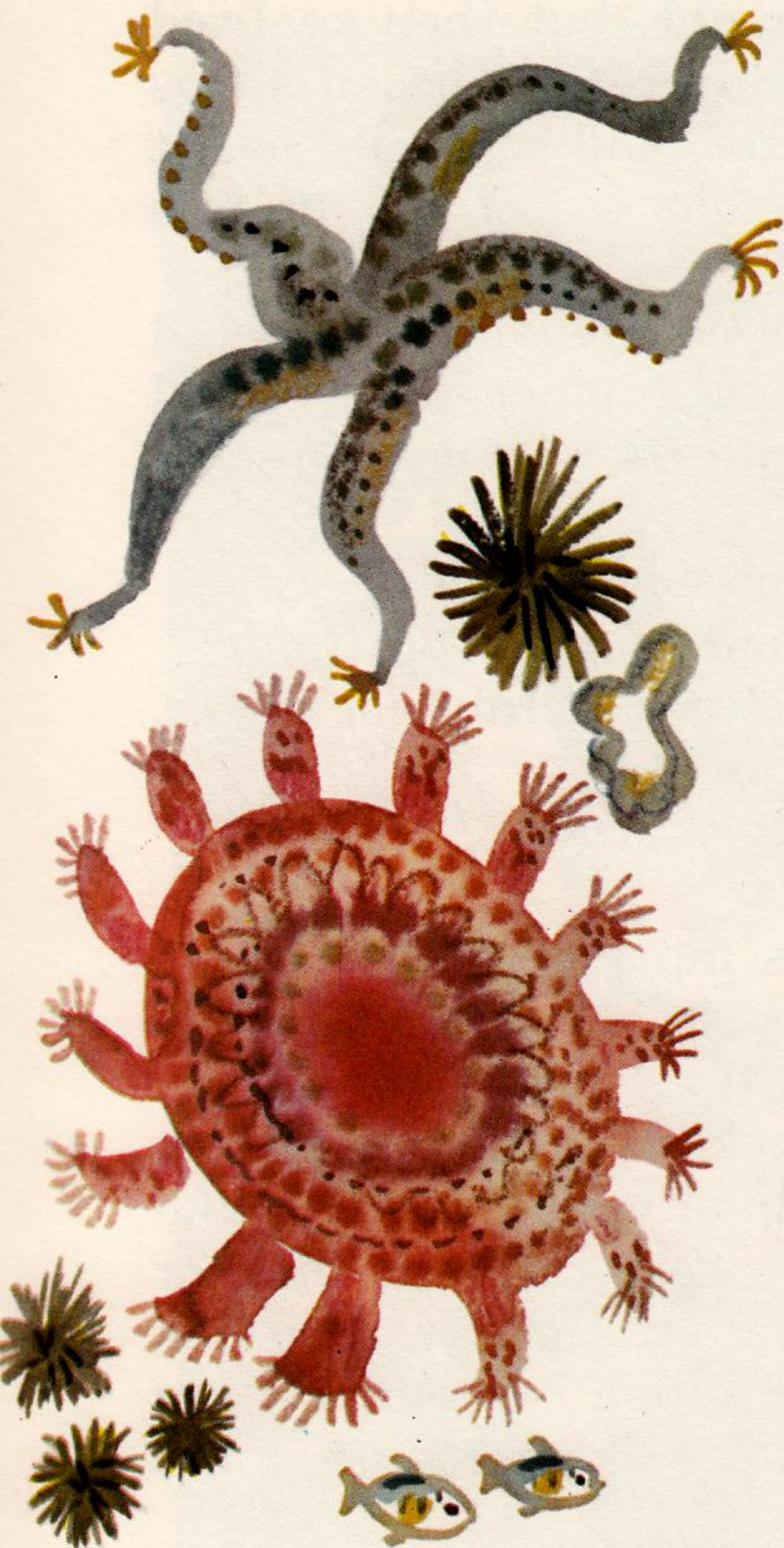
"Oh-oh! This stupid fish looks like it's going to eat me up!" Evseika said to himself.

Aloud he said carelessly, "No special reason. I was just out walking."

"Hm," the fish snorted again. "Are you sure you're not drowned?"

"I like that! Not at all! I'll get up now and..."

He tried to get up, but couldn't. Evseika felt as though he were wrapped up in a heavy blanket and couldn't move a muscle.



"I'm going to cry," he thought, but then realized crying wouldn't make any difference, because his tears would get lost in the water, and so he decided it was no use. Maybe he'd be able to get out of this awful mess some other way.

By now all sorts of sea creatures had gathered around him. There was a sea-cucumber that looked like a botched drawing of a pig. It was crawling up his leg and hissing:

"I'd like to get to know you better."

A sea-grape hovered in front of him, puffing:

"Just look at you: you're neither a crab, nor a fish, nor a clam. Tut-tut!"

"Well, maybe I'll be a flyer when I grow up," Evseika replied.

A lobster climbed onto his lap. Twisting its eyes round on their movable stalks, it asked politely:

"Could you please tell me the time?"

A cuttlefish swam by, looking just like a wet handkerchief, Portuguese men-of-war twinkled like little glass balls, a prawn was tickling one of Evseika's ears, while some other strange creature was feeling the other, and baby crayfish were travelling over his head, getting themselves all tangled up in his hair and pulling it.



“Oh-oh!” Evseika said to himself, trying to look happy and pleased, as Papa did when he’d done something wrong and Mama was angry at him.

Meanwhile, there were swarms of fish everywhere, moving their fins slowly, staring hard at him out of their round eyes that looked just as dull as algebra, and muttering:

“How can he live without feelers or scales?
We fish can never separate our tails.
He’s not at all like any of us.
Maybe he’s kin to the octopus?”

“These stupid fish don’t know what they’re talking about!” Evseika said to himself in a huff. He pretended he hadn’t heard them and even tried to whistle carelessly, but discovered he couldn’t: the water poured into his mouth, stopping it up like a cork.

Meanwhile, the talkative fish kept on with its questions.

“D’you like it here?”

“No, I mean, yes. I like my own home, too, though,” he said and got scared again. “What am I saying? What if it gets angry? They might all decide to eat me.” Aloud he said:

"I'm getting bored. Let's play."

The talkative fish liked the idea. It laughed, opening its round mouth so wide he could see its pink gills. It swished its tail, its sharp teeth flashed, and it shouted in a squeaky voice, "Yes, let's. I like to play."

"Let's swim up to the top," Evseika said.

"What for?"

"Well, we can't go any farther down, and there are flies up there."

"Fl-i-e-s! D'you like flies?"

Evseika only liked Mama, Papa and ice cream, but he said: "Yes."

"Well, then, let's go!" said the fish, heading upwards.

Evseika grabbed hold of its gills and shouted, "I'm ready!"

"Wait, monster! You've shoved your paws too far into my gills."

"Never mind!"

"What d'you mean, never mind? No decent fish can live without breathing."

"Why d'you keep on arguing? If we're going to play, then let's."

But all the time he was thinking: "If it'll just pull



me up a bit, I'll be able to swim the rest of the way myself."

The fish set off as though it were dancing, singing at the top of its voice as it swam:

"Fluttering his fins
Is toothy, skinny
Old Pike.
Looking for a bite."

Little minnows swam around them, gurgling in chorus:

"Just imagine!
What a scream!
Pike intends
To catch young Bream!"

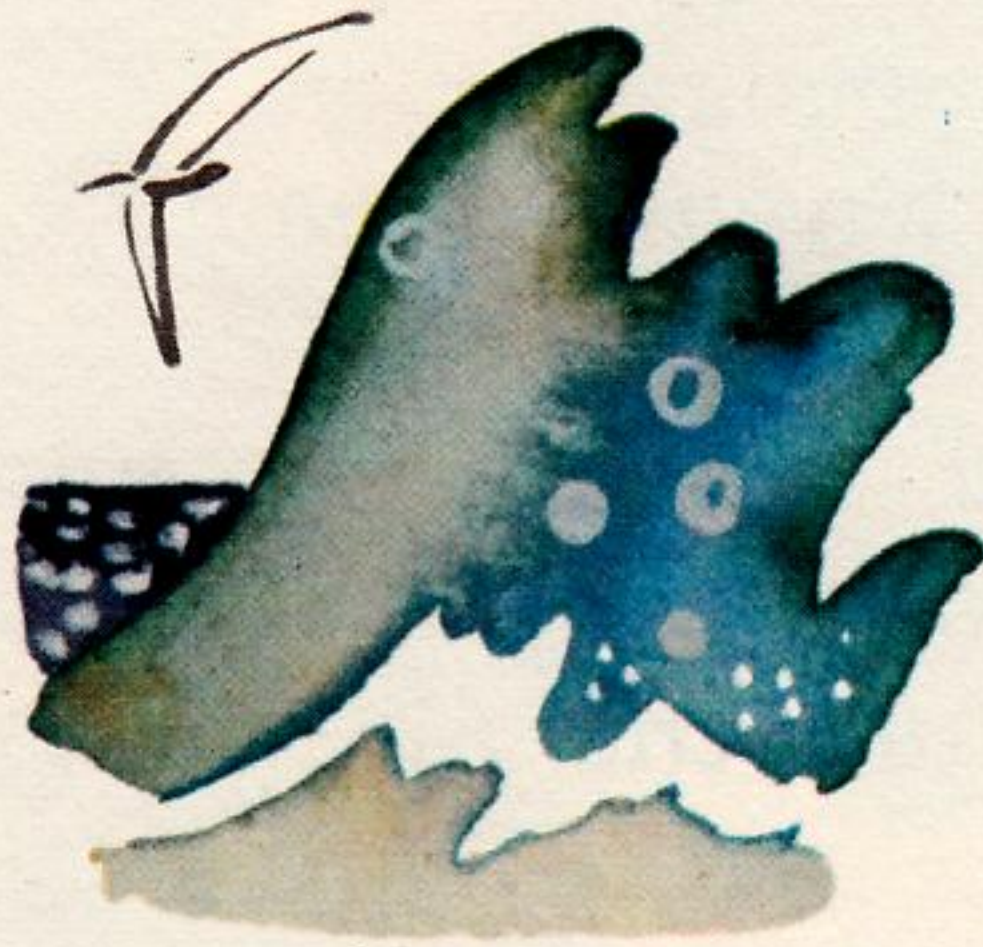
They swam and they swam, and the higher they rose the faster they swam, until Evseika suddenly felt his head pop out into the air.

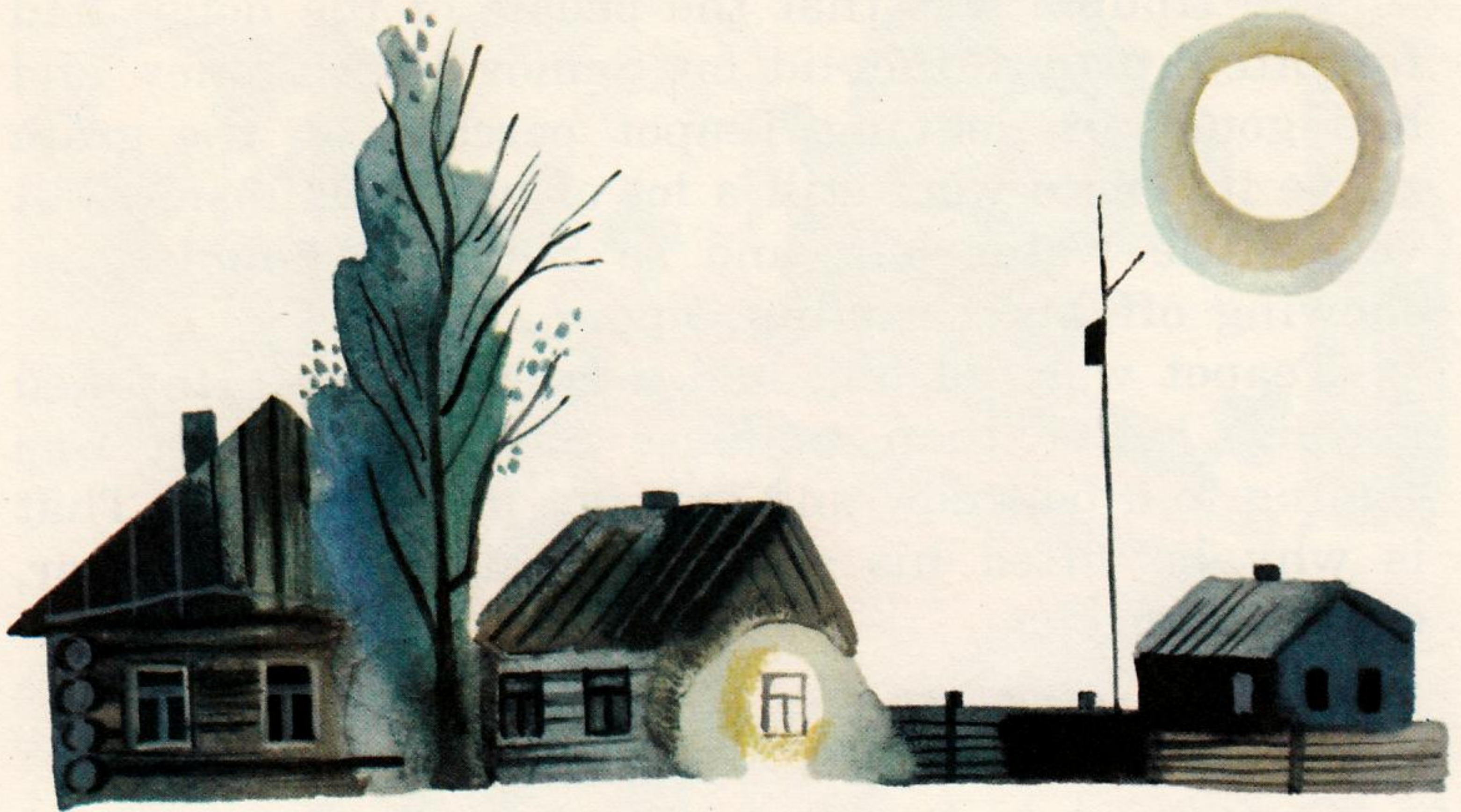
"Oh!"

It was bright daylight. The sun was playing on the water, and the green waves lapped at the shore with a swishing, singing sound. His fishing rod was floating out to sea, a long way from the shore, while he was

still sitting on the same rock he had toppled off, but he was already quite dry.

“Well,” he said, smiling up at the sun, “I’ve come up to the surface again.”





THE SAMOVAR

It all happened one summer night at the summer cottage. Pot-bellied Samovar on the table by the window in the small room looked up at the sky and sang hotly:

“Have you noticed that the Moon
Loves me so it’s going to swoon?”

The trouble was that the people of the house had forgotten to put the lid on Samovar's chimney and had gone out, leaving Teapot perched on the grate above it. There were still a lot of hot coals inside, but very little water left, and so Samovar bubbled on, showing off his gleaming copper.

Teapot was old and had a cracked side. He liked nothing better than to tease Samovar. Teapot was coming to a boil now and was not pleased at all. That is why he lifted his snout and hissed at Samovar, egging him on:

“The Moon looks down
With a frown
On silly you,
That's who!”

Samovar snorted a puff of steam and grumbled:

“Wrong you are!
We're really kin,
Both made of copper,
Not of tin,
But Moon's all spotted,
It's deformed.”

“What a braggart!
What a bore!”



Teapot hissed, sending out a puff of hot steam from his own snout.

Little Samovar loved to boast. He thought he was very smart and handsome. He'd long hoped someone would take the Moon down out of the sky and use it for a tray under him.

Samovar puffed on with great importance, pretending he hadn't heard what Teapot had said. He sang on at the top of his voice:

“Huff! How hot I am!
Puff! How great I am!
I can fly to the Moon,
And I'll prove it soon.”

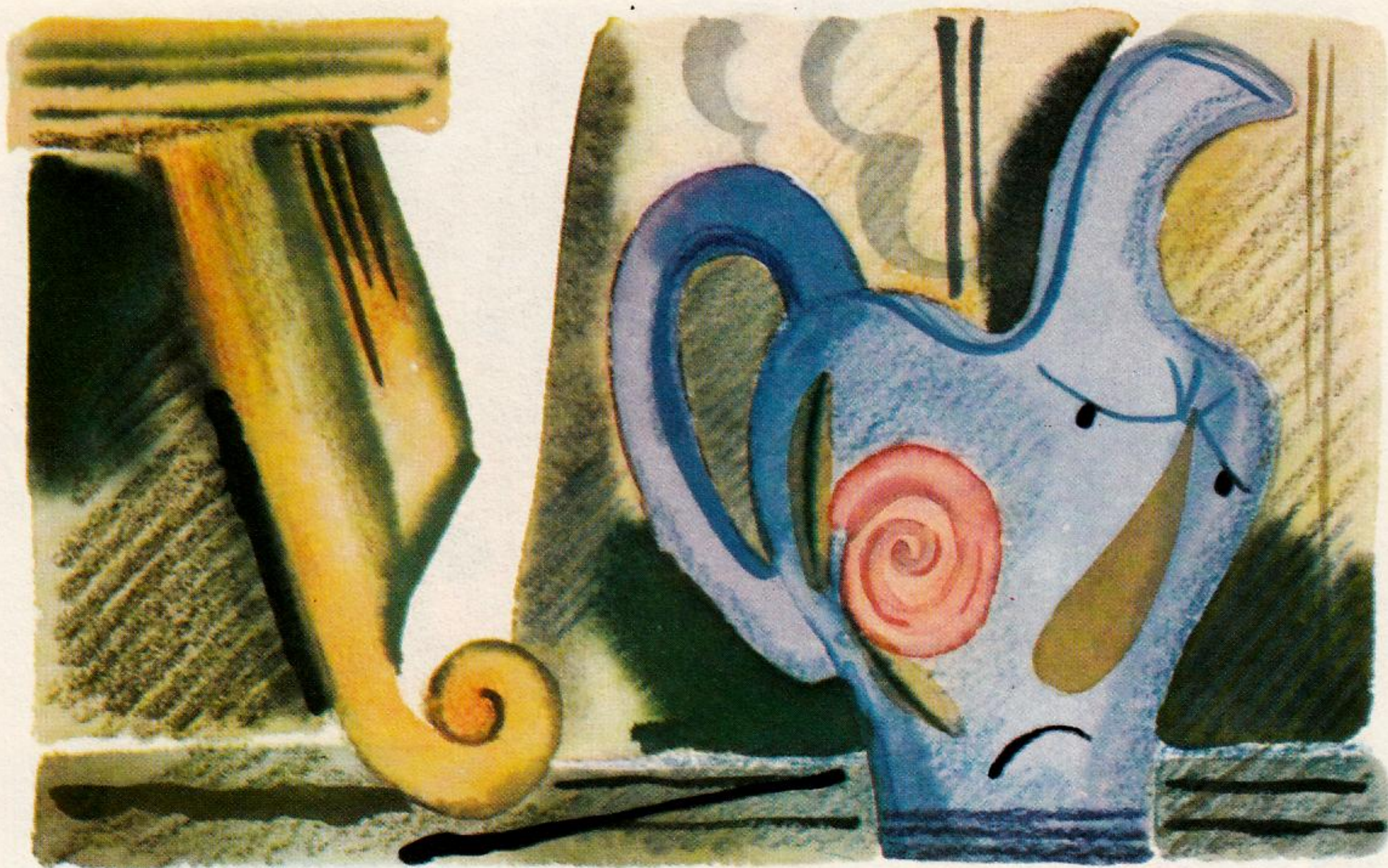
Teapot, however, hissed out his own song:

“What's the use of idle chatter
And clatter?
Go on, fly!
Let's see you try!”

Samovar was so hot by now he had turned blue in the face and was shaking as he boomed:

“I'll boil a bit more,
Then fly out the door,





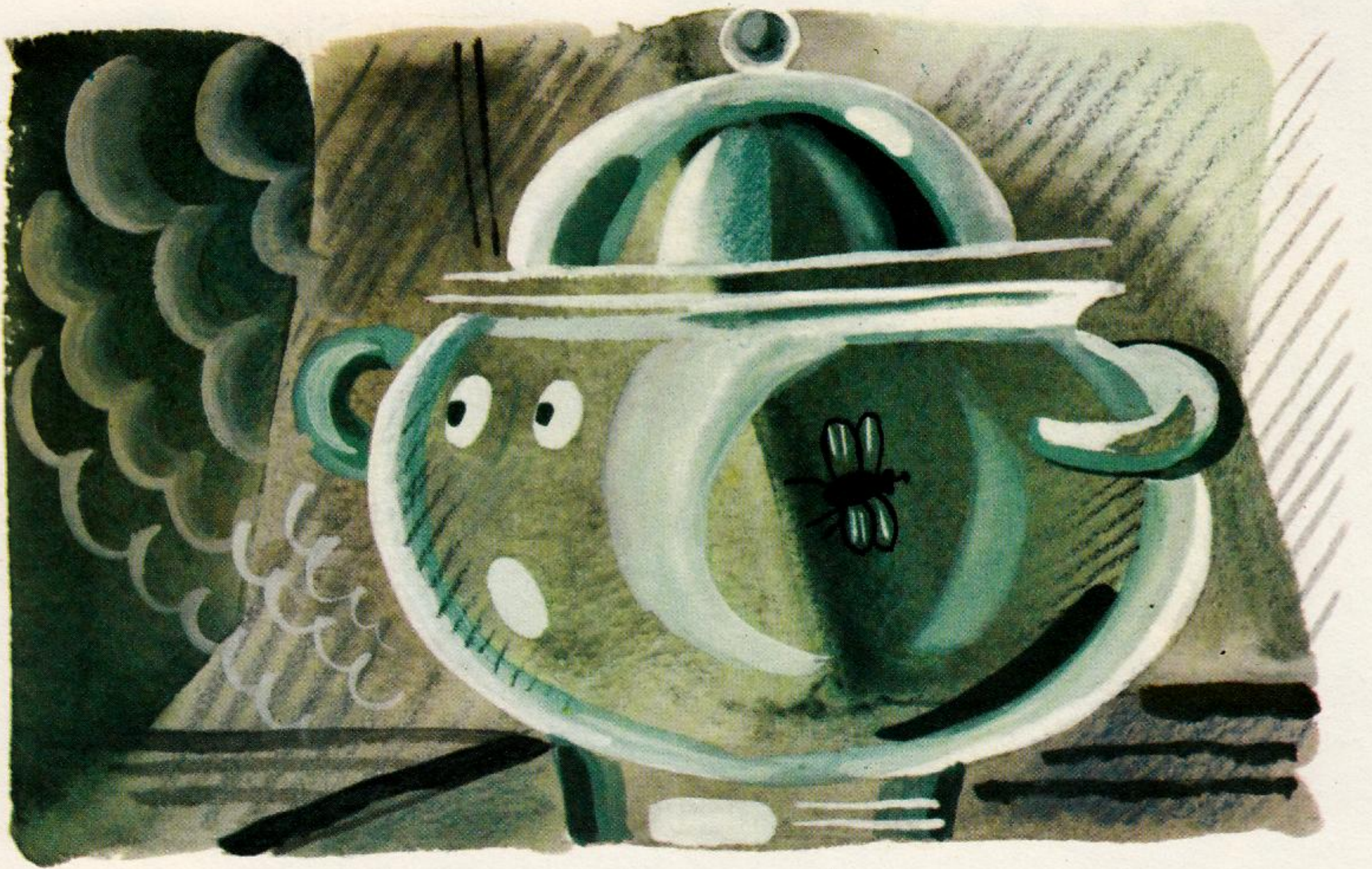
Out of the room
And marry the Moon.”

So the two of them boiled and hissed, keeping everyone else on the table awake. Teapot teased:

“It looks more like gold.”

“But it hasn’t any coals,”

Samovar replied.



Blue Creamer, who was now empty, said to Sugar Bowl, who was made of glass and was also empty:

“I can’t stand it! Wait and see,
These two will be the death of me!”

“Their silly prattle
Makes my head rattle,”

Sugar Bowl replied in a sugary voice. She was round and plump, and loved to laugh. Cream Jug, however, was a glum, one-armed, humpbacked fellow who always saw the dark side of everything.

“All is empty, all is dreary,
Both Samovar and Moon look bleary.”

Sugar Bowl shivered and cried:

“A fly just crawled inside of me,
It’s tickling my side.
I am worried as can be,
For I’ll laugh, and we’ll collide.”

“Glassy laughter
Is not what I’m after,”

Cream Jug remarked gloomily.
Sooty Chimney Lid woke up and piped:

“Ping! Who’s hissing?
What have I been missing?
Why are you all up?
What did you say, Cup?”



But then she looked at Samovar and tinkled in
fright:

“The people have gone for a stroll,
I don’t know where they are.
Don’t they know they left coals
In old Samovar?
How could they have forgotten
Poor Chimney Lid?
The water’s down to the bottom,
It’s best we all hid!”

At this, the cups woke up and started to clatter
noisily:

“We’re shy little cups,
We don’t know what’s up,
Yet, we’ve heard all this
Before.
Samovar likes to swagger,
He’s a boaster and a braggart,
But we don’t believe him
Any more!”

Teapot grumbled:

“Puff! It’s hot!
I know it’s not
Accidental.
It’s detrimental!”



Samovar was feeling awful by now, because all the water inside him had boiled out. He was glowing hot, his tap had got unsoldered from the heat and was hanging loosely, while his handle had become twisted. But still, looking up at the Moon, he continued to boast and to boom:

“If only she were nearer,
And in daytime clearer,
We’d share my fire and water,
And she’d love me.
We surely would be happy,
I’d feel so very snappy,
And if it rained, it always
Would rain tea.”

He could hardly speak now and was tipping over to one side, but still, he went on mumbling:

“If she must go to bed at morn
To shine still brighter through the night,
Why, as the Sun I would perform,
And I would glow with all my might.
I’d give off warmth and lots of light,
For I’m much younger than the Sun.
It cannot shine both day and night,
While, as for me, it would be fun.”

Chimney Lid was delighted and rolled around on the table, piping loudly:

“How marvellous!
How glorious!
I’d be a damper for the Sun
And surely be the only one!”

But, suddenly—*crash!*—Samovar exploded into tiny bits. The tap plopped into the waste bowl and smashed it. The chimney and lid tilted and toppled, knocking off Cream Jug’s handle. Chimney Lid was terrified and slid across to the edge of the table, mumbling:

“People often say
Fate is very hard,
Yet, they’ve gone away
And left Samovar!”



But the cups, who were not afraid of anything,
laughed and sang:

“Samovar was round and hot,
He had no cares at all,
But, indeed, sad was his lot,
For he is here no more!
The fire roared,
The water steamed
Until it all boiled out.
Proud Samovar
Just went too far,
That’s what this tale’s about.”





IVAN THE FOOL

(A Russian Folk Tale)

Once upon a time there was a handsome fellow named Ivan the Fool. Whatever he did turned out to be silly and not at all as others did.

A peasant hired Ivan to work for him, but as the man and his wife were going into town, the wife said to Ivan:

“Stay here with the children. Watch over them and feed them.”

“What must I give them?” Ivan asked.

“Take some water, flour and potatoes, cut them up and make some soup.”

“And keep an eye on the door, so the children won’t run off to the woods,” the peasant said.

The peasant and his wife left for town. Ivan climbed up onto the bunks, woke up the children, pulled them down, sat on the floor behind them and said, “Well, I’m watching over you.”

The children sat on the floor for a while and then said they were hungry. Ivan dragged a tub of water into the cottage, poured in half a sack of flour, a measure of potatoes, stirred everything with a yoke and wondered aloud:

“Who do I cut up?”

The children heard him and were terrified. What if he cut them up? And so they crept quietly out of the cottage.

Ivan watched them go, scratched his head and said, “How can I watch over them now? And besides, I’ve got to keep an eye on the door, too, to see it doesn’t run off.”

He looked into the tub and said, “You go on and



boil, soup. I'm going off to watch over the children."

He took the door off its hinges, hoisted it onto his back and set out for the woods. Suddenly, he came upon a bear.

"Hey, you! Why're you taking wood into the woods?" it growled in surprise.

When Ivan told Bear what had happened, Bear sat back on his haunches and laughed.

"What a fool you are! I'll eat you up for that!"

"Eat up the children instead, so's they mind their parents next time and don't run off to the woods."

At this Bear laughed still louder and rolled around on the ground. "I've never seen anyone so foolish in my life! Come, I want to show you to my wife," he said and led Ivan off to his den.

Ivan walked along behind, jarring the door against the pine trees.

"Oh, leave it!" said Bear.

"No, I'm true to my word. I promised to keep an eye on it, and I will."

When they came to the den Bear said to his wife,

"Look at the fool I've brought home, Masha. You won't believe it."

"Have you seen the children?" Ivan said to her.

"Mine are at home, asleep."





“Let me have a look at them. They just might be mine.”

So Mother Bear took Ivan to see her three cubs.

“No, they’re not mine. I only had two,” he said.

By now she saw how foolish he was and laughed, too. “But yours were human children!”

“It’s hard to tell the difference when they’re little,” Ivan replied.

“What a funny fellow,” she said and, turning to



her husband, added, "Let's not eat him. He can live here and work for us."

"All right," said Bear. "Though he's human, he's quite harmless."

Mother Bear then gave Ivan a basket and said, "Go out and pick some raspberries in the woods so I can give my cubs a treat when they get up."

"All right," said Ivan, "but you keep an eye on the door."



He set out for the raspberry patch, picked a basketful, ate as much as he could and started back to the bears' den, singing loudly all the while:

Ah, how tricky
Ladybugs are.
Lizards run quickly
And ants go far!"

"Here are the raspberries!" he shouted when he got back.

The cubs came scampering out. They pushed one another, growled and rolled about. That's how happy they were!

"Too bad I'm not a bear, or I'd have children, too," said Ivan as he watched them.

The elder bears laughed heartily at this.

"Goodness!" Bear gasped, "I'll die of laughing."

"You keep an eye on the door. I'm going to look for the children, or my master'll give me what for!" said Ivan.

"Why don't you help him?" Mother Bear said to her husband.

"Yes, you're right. He's so funny," said Bear.

So he and Ivan set off through the forest. As they walked along, they chatted like old friends.

"You're so foolish," Bear said.

"And are you clever?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"I don't know."

"Neither do I. Are you mean?"

"No. Why should I be?"

"I think anyone who's mean is foolish. I'm not mean, either. That means neither of us is foolish."

"That's very smart of you," said Bear.

All of a sudden they spotted two children asleep under a bush.

"Are they yours?" Bear asked.

"I don't know. Let's ask them. Mine were hungry."

They roused the children and said:

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes! We're starved!" the children shouted.

"Well! That means they're mine," said Ivan. "I'll take them back to the village, and you, Bear, please take the door, since I've no time myself now. I've still got to cook some soup."

"All right," said Bear, "I'll bring it along."

Ivan walked on behind the children, watching over them as he'd been told, and singing on the way:



One day a fat beetle
Caught a hare,
While Foxy nearly
Passed out in her lair."

When he got back to the cottage he found the master and his wife there. They'd returned from town and discovered the tub full of water, potatoes and flour set in the middle of the room. The children were nowhere to be seen, and the door was gone. They had sat down on the bench and were now weeping bitterly.

"What's the matter?" Ivan asked.

At the sight of the children they became overjoyed and embraced them. Then they pointed to Ivan's cooking in the tub and said, "What's this mess?"

"Soup."

"Is that the way to make it?"

"How should I know?"

"And where's the door?"

"It's on the way. Ah, here it is!"

The master and his wife looked out the window. There was Bear coming down the street, carrying the door. People scattered at the sight of him, climbing trees and clambering up onto the roofs. The village



dogs were terrified. They got stuck in the wattle fences and under the gates. Only the red cockerel stood bravely in the middle of the street and scolded Bear:

“Cock-a-doodle-do!”





M O R N I N G

There's nothing better than watching the birth of a new day.

The first ray of the sun lights up the sky, and the shadows of night quietly creep into the mountain gorges and crevices of rocks, they hide in the crowns



of the trees and in the lacework of the dew-drenched grass, while the mountain peaks smile kindly, as though saying to the soft shadows of the night:

“Don’t be frightened. It’s the Sun.”

The waves of the sea raise their white caps and bow to the Sun like beautiful court ladies curtsying to their king, and they chant: “Hail, ruler of the world!”

The good-natured Sun laughs, because the waves that had played and swirled all through the night are now dishevelled, their green garments are crumpled, and their velvet trains are all tangled.

“Good day!” says the Sun, rising up over the sea. “Good day, my beauties. That’s enough now. Don’t be so rough. If you don’t stop leaping so high the children won’t be able to swim. Everyone on earth should be happy, shouldn’t they?”

Green lizards scurry out from the crevices in the rocks. Blinking their sleepy little eyes, they say to one another: “It’s going to be a hot day.”

Flies become sluggish in the heat, and then the lizards snap them up. A good fly is so tasty, and the lizards are real gourmets.

Heavy with dew, the flowers sway playfully. They seem to be teasing as they say: “Be so kind, sir, as to describe how beautiful we are in the morning when

we are clothed in dew. Portray each of us in your story. It's not difficult, for we're so simple."

The little vixens! They know perfectly well that words can never describe their gentle beauty, and they mock me.

I doff my hat respectfully and say, "You're so very kind. I'm honored, but I have no time to spare today. Some other day, perhaps."

They smile proudly as they stretch up to the Sun. Its rays gleam in the dewdrops, covering the petals and leaves with a glitter of diamonds.

Golden honeybees and wasps circle above them, sipping the sweet nectar hungrily as their fuzzy song fills the warm air:

"Glory to the Sun,
Source of all life.
Glory to toil
That makes the Earth bright."

Now the robins have awakened. They sway on their thin legs as they sing their song of quiet joy, for birds know far better than we do how good it is to be alive. Robins are always the first to greet the Sun. In the distant cold of Russia they're called "birds of the



dawn", because their chest feathers are the color of sunrise. Cheerful gray-and-yellow siskins hop about in the bushes like street urchins, just as full of mischief and making just as much noise.

Swallows and swifts flash by like black arrows as they chase after midges. Their cries are full of joy at having wings so swift and buoyant.

The boughs of the Italian pines tremble. The trees look like great goblets filled with sunlight as with golden wine.

People awaken, those whose lives are spent in toil, those who spend their lives making the world more beautiful and more bounteous, though they themselves remain forever poor.

Why is this so?

You'll find out when you're grown if, of course, you'll want to. Meanwhile, just love the Sun, the source of all joy and strength, and be cheerful and kind, as the Sun is kind to one and all.

People awaken and go out into the fields to their work. The Sun looks down at them and smiles. It knows as no one else does of all the good people have wrought on Earth, for it once shone down on a lifeless planet. Now the Earth reflects the great toil of many generations of people, of our fathers, grandfathers

and great-grandfathers. While doing important and necessary things which children find so hard to understand, they also made all the toys and all the many pleasant things in the world, including the movies.

Our ancestors did a fine job, indeed. There is good reason why we admire and respect their great toil that is everywhere.

One should think about this, children. The story of how people toiled on Earth is the most interesting story of all.

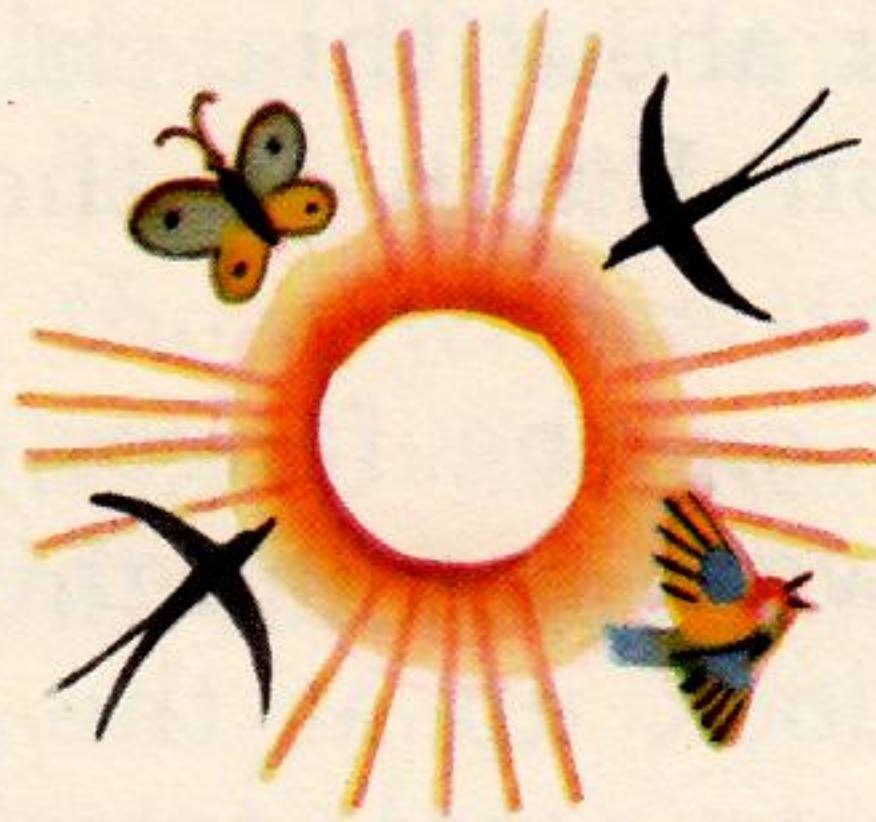
Red roses bloom on the fences around the fields, and everywhere flowers are laughing. Many of them are fading, but all look up at the golden Sun in the blue sky. Their velvety petals tremble and give off a sweet scent. A gentle song wafts softly in the warm, blue, fragrant air:

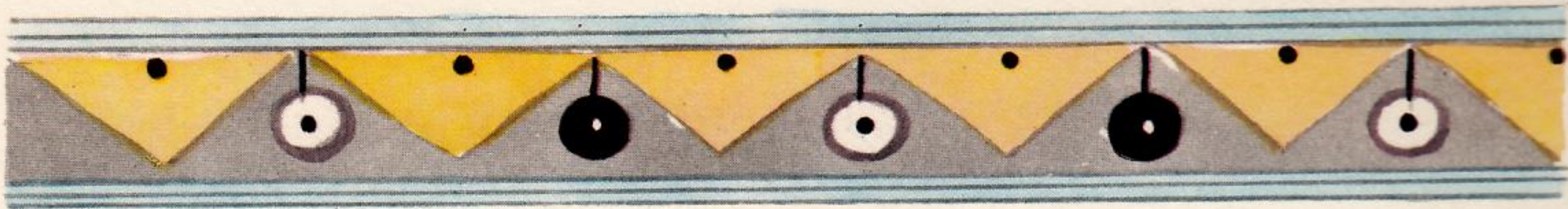
That which is lovely, is lovely,
Even though wilting.
That which we love, we love,
Even in death.

Good morning to you, children, and may there be many good days ahead in your lives.

Does this sound dull?

There's nothing to be done about it, for when a child turns forty he becomes a bit long-winded.





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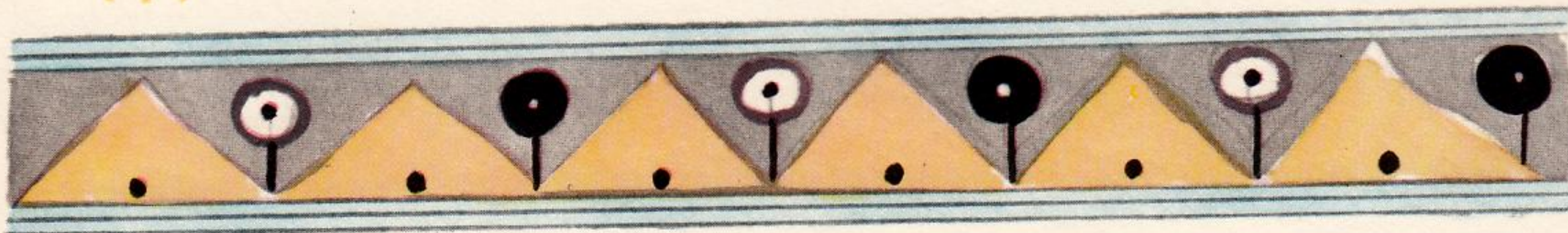


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